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Apex court regrets abysmal state of prosecution

• In decision authored before his resignation, ex-judge Minallah highlights lack of professionalism, integrity in criminal probes • Questions validity of judicial confessions used to convict accused; holds that appellants are entitled to benefit of doubt

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Former Supreme Court judge Justice Athar Minallah, in a recently uploaded judgement, expressed disappointment over the state of the criminal justice system, highlighting deficiencies in integrity, competence, and professionalism in investigations and prosecutions.

Justice Minallah headed a three-judge SC bench deciding an appeal filed by Said-ur-Rehman against a Peshawar High Court, Mingora Bench (Darul Qaza Swat) verdict dated June 9, 2021.

He observed that the case reflected the inability of investigating officers to effectively discharge their statutory duties.

The case was related to the murders of two young men, Shah Faisal, 18, and Shafi-ur-Rehman, 15, in a remote area of Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The complainant, Zulekha Bibi, and her husband Gul Zaman resided with a family in Jibraik village located on the bank of Chitral River.

A bridge connecting the village to Domel was hindered by Chitral Scouts, who restricted evening crossings unless permission was granted, the judgement recalled.

Zulekha Bibi reported to Sub-Inspector Paneen Nawaz on Feb 16, 2016, that her son, Shah Faisal, and her husband's nephew, Shafi-ur-Rehman, had gone missing.

She named eight suspects, including the appellants, alleging abduction. The complaint was received on Feb 17, 2016.

Despite disclosing a cognisable offence, it was recorded in the daily diary rather than the register under Section 154 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 (CrPC).

An application for inquiry under Section 156(3) CrPC was submitted to a magistrate and allowed. After making the entry, SI Nawaz arrested both the appellants.

However, the events narrated in the complainant's testimony during the trial differed from the version recorded in the official complaint.

The appellant, Said-ur-Rehman, was convicted under Section 201 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment, with an additional three years under Section 15(AA) PPC, to run concurrently with the benefit of Section 382-B CrPC.

The high court upheld the convictions and dismissed the appeals filed by the appellants through the impugned judgement of June 9, 2021.

The appellants challenged the decision before the SC, while the complainant also filed separate petitions against the acquittal of the co-accused.

Validity of judicial confessions

Justice Minallah observed that there was no last seen evidence except for the statements of the prosecution witnesses regarding the victims' movement over the bridge, adding that the prosecution's case rested mainly on the judicial confessions of the appellants under Section 164 CrPC.

He recalled that the SC had consistently held that a judicial confession might form the basis of a conviction if it was found to be true and made voluntarily.

Even a retracted confession retained evidentiary value if it was recorded in accordance with law and was corroborated by independent evidence.

Justice Minallah observed that the delay in recording a judicial confession, particularly while the accused remained in police custody, caste doubt on its voluntariness and necessitated heightened judicial scrutiny.

The judgement read that the prosecution's case was in its entirety based on circumstantial evidence as there was no direct ocular testimony linking the appellants to the commission of the offence.

Therefore, their arrest was illegal, and the judicial confession, purportedly voluntary, was surrounded by serious doubts.

At the conclusion, the SC held that the appellants were entitled to the benefit of doubt and could not be convicted on the charges framed against them.

JF-17 becomes centre of attention at Dubai airshow

Several countries eye battle-proven fighter jet; MoU for procurement signed with 'friendly country'

Dawn Report

PAKISTAN'S contingent at the Dubai airshow features the JF-17 Thunder Block-III and the Super Mushshak trainer.—Courtesy ISPR

ISLAMABAD: The JF-17 Thunder Block-III drew significant attention, emerging as a "major focal point" at the Dubai Airshow 2025, with an MoU (memorandum of understanding) signed with a friendly country for the procurement of the fighter jet.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), in a statement released on Thursday, said that several countries also expressed interest in acquiring the battle-proven fighter aircraft.

The fighter has proved its combat capabilities during two conflicts with arch-rival India in 2019 and 2025. The biennial airshow is being held at Dubai's Al Maktoum International Airport from November 17-21.

"Demonstrating increasing international confidence in Pakistan's aviation industry, several countries expressed interest in acquiring the JF-17 Thunder.

In a noteworthy development, an MoU was signed with a friendly country for the procurement of the JF-17 Thunder, marking another significant milestone in Pakistan's expanding defence and industrial partnerships."

A Pakistan Air Force (PAF) contingent arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to participate in the Dubai Airshow 2025.

The contingent features the advanced JF-17 Thunder Block-III and the renowned Super Mushshak trainer aircraft, reflecting Pakistan's growing expertise in indigenous military aviation.The JF-17 Block-III is a 4.5-generation multi-role fighter jet equipped with an advanced radar and long-range, beyond-visual-range missiles capable of undertaking a wide variety of combat missions.

The ISPR further said Chief of the Air Staff Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu held a series of high-level engagements with air chiefs from friendly countries on the event's sidelines.

"The UAE military leadership lauded PAF's modernisation initiatives and growing indigenous capabilities with a shared resolve to further strengthen military engagement through joint exercises, professional exchanges and forward-looking partnerships," ISPR said.

Held-Kashmir's oldest English daily raided

• Investigation agency brands *Kashmir Times* 'anti-national'; editors call the measure 'another attempt to silence us' • AJK PM slams action as bid to stifle voices against human right abuses • Journalist groups decry 'deeply troubling' move as an assault on press freedom

MUZAFFARABAD: India-held Kashmir's State Investigative Agency (SIA) on Thursday raided the office of occupied Kashmir's oldest English newspaper, the *Kashmir Times*, as part of a widening crackdown on media outlets officials accuse of "aiding separatist narratives".

The raid was conducted after a FIR was filed alleging the organisation was involved in "anti-national activities and attempts to spread disaffection against the country", *Indian Express* reported.

The investigation is scrutinising alleged communications that pose "potential threats to the sovereignty and integrity of India," the report said, citing official sources.

During the raid, which began at 6am, officials seized documents, digital equipment and other materials.

In a joint statement, *Kashmir Times* editors Prabodh Jamwal and Anuradha Bhasin called the raid "yet another attempt to silence us" and said the accusations were an attempt "to intimidate, to delegitimise, and ultimately to silence".

For its part, the SIA claimed that no platform could be permitted to advance "seditious or anti-national content".

Condemnations

Meanwhile, the prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and press freedom organisations condemned the raid and the filing of a case against its veteran editor, Anuradha Bhasin, describing the move as another assault on press freedom in the region.

AJK Prime Minister Mumtaz Rathore said the *Kashmir Times* had consistently supported the right of Kashmiris to self-determination and exposed human rights violations. He accused India of trying to silence dissent in the territory.

"India was suppressing every voice in the occupied territory that sought to document or highlight its 'crimes against humanity," Rathore said in a statement.

He noted that pro-freedom leaders, human rights defenders like Khurram Parvez, and several journalists were imprisoned on "baseless charges".

He said India could not crush the Kashmiri struggle "through force, intimidation or censorship" and added that "the day is not far when India-occupied Kashmir will be liberated and the vision of a complete Pakistan will be realised".

Journalist bodies in the AJK capital also condemned the raids.

The Central Press Club (CPC) and the Capital Journalists Forum (CJF) recalled the unexplained sealing of the newspaper's Srinagar office in October 2020, which they said dealt a major blow to press freedom and forced the paper to cease its print edition.

Both organisations described the action as 'deeply alarming and undemocratic', urging India to cease its pressure on independent media and called upon global press freedom and human rights organisations to ensure that journalists in the region could report without fear.

The US-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) termed the raid "deeply troubling" and demanded that police explain the legal basis for the action and return any seized property.

"The raid on the *Kashmir Times* office is deeply troubling and raises concerns about increasing pressure on media outlets in Jammu and Kashmir," said CPJ Asia-Pacific Program Coordinator Kunal Majumder. "News outlets should not face punitive action simply for doing their journalistic work."

Ms Bhasin informed CPJ of her unawareness of any case against her and said the newspaper's Jammu office has been inactive since 2022 due to financial difficulties, containing only old computers and archives from its founding in 1954 by her father. —Monitoring Desk / Tariq Naqash

G20 billionaires' one-year earnings could end world poverty: Oxfam

Calls for the wealthy to be 'fairly taxed' to help end poverty, fight climate breakdown

JOHANNESBURG: Billionaires in the world's leading economies made $2.2 trillion last year, which would have been enough to lift all the world's poor out of poverty, global campaign group Oxfam said on Thursday.

The British-based charity urged this weekend's summit of the powerful G20 group of major economies to back initiatives by the host, South Africa, to address massive global wealth inequality and the debt undermining developing countries.

Billionaires in the 19 countries that are part of the grouping made $2.2tr last year as their combined wealth grew to $15.6tr, it said, basing its figures on the Forbes list.

"The annual cost to lift up the 3.8 billion people who currently live below the poverty line is $1.65tr," it said in a statement.

Oxfam backed a recommendation that South Africa will present to the November 22-23 summit for the establishment of an international panel to tackle inequality in the same way the UN's IPCC works on the threat from global warming.

"If the South African G20 establishes a new International Panel on Inequality, it will be a tremendous step in addressing the inequality emergency," executive director Amitabh Behar said in the statement.

Oxfam also called for the world's wealthy to be "fairly taxed in order to help end poverty and fight the climate breakdown". It singled out the United States as championing "destructive policies — from reckless tariffs to regressive tax breaks and cuts to life-saving aid" that increase inequality between the rich and poor.

Calling for action on debt, it said 3.4 billion people live in countries that spend more on interest repayments than on education or health.

The G20 includes 19 countries as well as the European Union and African Union, which together represent 85 per cent of global GDP and two-thirds of the world population.

South Africa hopes its summit, the first G20 in Africa, will advance issues facing the continent and developing countries in the "Global South" before the rotating presidency is handed to the United States for 2026.—AFP

Chevron | HBL

Chevron Pakistan Lubricants and HBL launch strategic partnership to enhance automotive care

Chevron Pakistan Lubricants (Private) Limited is pleased to announce the establishment of a strategic partnership with HBL. This collaboration enables HBL credit card holders to redeem HBL reward points at selected Caltex oil change facilities in key cities, providing seamless access to authentic, high-quality Caltex lubricants.

By integrating HBL's reward program with Caltex oil change outlets, customers are assured of high-quality lubricants and superior service, supporting optimal vehicle performance and an elevated driving experience.

Ahmed Zahid Zaheer, Country Chairman & CEO-Chevron Pakistan, commented, "Our collaboration with HBL exemplifies our dedication to delivering exceptional products and services. We are proud to offer enhanced value to HBL's credit card holders and anticipate further customer-focused initiatives as our partnership evolves."

Aamir Kureshi, Head Products Transactional Services and Solution Delivery – HBL, said, "Clients remain at the heart of what the Bank does. HBL is committed to improving its clients' lives by delivering convenience, value, and relevance through strategic partnerships. This collaboration with Chevron Pakistan Lubricants reflects that commitment—going beyond products to build relationships founded on trust and responsive service."

The HBL reward points redemption program is now operational at participating Caltex oil change outlets, with expansion plans underway to extend this benefit to additional locations.

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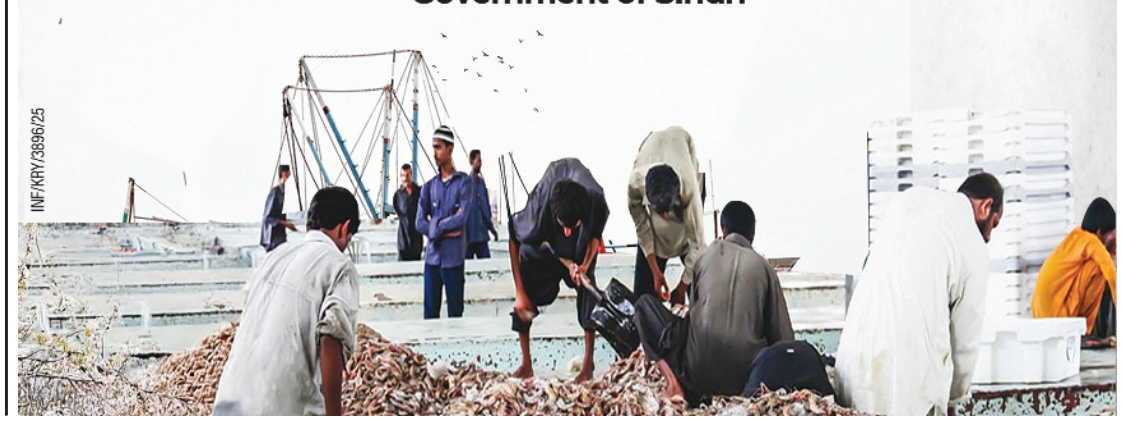
Livestock & Fisheries Department,
Government of Sindh



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